

Fourth meeting of the Victim Service Coordinating Council (April 5, 2007)

Present: Nancy Barton, William Bilton, Hope Blackley, Vicki Bourus, Marvin Bryant, Dottie Cronise, Barbara Grissom, Dean Kilpatrick, Surleaner Lakin, BJ Nelson, Tricia Phaup, Bob Rightsell, Veronica Swain, Sandi Wofford, Anne Wolf.

Absent: Colleen Bozard, Ashlie Lancaster (Colleen sent written comments to be forwarded to the Standards workgroup).

This meeting was convened specifically to discuss the Standards workgroup's draft. The workgroup chair summarized revisions to the draft.

There was discussion of why 'compensation fund' language was dropped in the draft. It was noted by workgroup members that the language was defunct and now addressed through other legislation.

There was discussion of whether the draft's language regarding who should be certified (i.e., job description includes providing victim services) was too broad. Limiting certification to those whose "primary duties" were to provide such services might exclude LEVAs. The group generally felt that the draft language was appropriate and left latitude for the VSCC to further operationalize concepts as needed.

There was discussion of whether the draft should exclude nonprofits from certification requirements and just cover public providers of service. This prompted concern that such action would exacerbate a lack of interface between public and nonprofit providers. Several nonprofits felt strongly that excluding them from the legislation could have negative implications.

It was noted that SCCADVASA had spent a great deal of time developing a system of training and standards for providers; there was concern that including sexual assault and domestic violence service providers in certification requirements would compromise their own collectively established standards. It was noted that SCCADVASA training could be submitted to be an approved training for certification. Some felt that SCCADVASA's foundation training for new providers might actually exceed the eventual certification standards and that the main added requirement would be continuing education. Several VSCC members noted inclusion of nonprofits was practically an "all or nothing" option; if SCCADVASA opted not to be included in the legislation, it would thereby undermine ability of other nonprofits to be included. It was also noted that nonprofits held seats on this council to be charged with overseeing certification of public providers, yet these nonprofits may not have to abide by the standards they helped to oversee. It was decided that Vicki would solicit input from SCCADVASA membership and report to the Standards workgroup chair by a specified date and that continued discussion of the topic would be delayed until the next VSCC

meeting. Veronica will contact several other key nonprofits (e.g., MADD, NCMEC) to solicit input.

There was discussion of why the draft legislation housed the new certification entity within the Ombudsman's office, and it was suggested that SOVA may be a more appropriate location for this entity. The concern was that added duties would detract from the Ombudsman's required duties of handling victim complaints and may present a conflict of interest if a complaint relates to poorly trained advocates. One concern about SOVA housing the certification entity was that SOVA is a mandated provider of training and could thereby be presented with a conflict in approving their own training. It was noted that the VSCC had a role in ultimate approval of training to meet proposed certification requirements, thereby rendering that concern somewhat moot. There was discussion of the Ombudsman's neutrality and the rigor through which the Ombudsman is appointed. These qualities were thought to be beneficial, and there was general agreement that the draft should retain wording to house the certification within the Ombudsman's office.

There was discussion of the costs of implementing certification. Dana noted that nationally, states that require certification provide a basic training/certification package at a cost of \$150 to \$300 per participant, plus continuing education costs and about \$35 every three years for recertification. It was noted that the proposed system would incorporate existing training from a variety of providers, rendering it more flexible and affordable depending on an individual's chosen course of training. There was discussion of funds from SOVA being allocated for new positions in the Ombudsman's office. It was decided that Bob would talk with the SOVA director regarding feasibility.

It was suggested that the VSCC revisit discussion of who should serve on the Council as drafted in the legislative proposal. Members of the Standards workgroup explained the rationale for their proposed membership, which included entities with statutory responsibilities for direct service to victims as well as entities that were described as functional groups, all with consideration of necessary limitations on Council size. There was a recommendation that law enforcement advocate and solicitors' advocates be specifically included; it was agreed that these representatives would take over slots initially denoted as "at large." It was suggested that there be a slot for a Summary Court judge; this produced concern over conflict of interest. It was decided that Sandi would contact an appropriate individual to ascertain suitability (Note on results of her inquiry: It was decided that there would be a definite conflict of interest).

There was discussion of other potential representatives and the potential for VSCC membership as a way to educate certain types of stakeholders and keep them informed. It was noted that this could be done via regular written reports and updates. Several additional types of representatives were suggested, but there was no consensus to add these, in that increased group size had potential to become counterproductive. It was noted that VSCC members have a responsibility to gather input from stakeholders that are not directly represented on the Council.

There was a report from the Safety & Accountability Audit workgroup on progress. They met and provided several specific written ideas for how to proceed. Recommendations included hiring a state-wide audit coordinator to be housed in the Ombudsman's office, as well as developing and pilot testing audits in two or three counties in SC.

The next VSCC meeting was set for Friday, May 11th at 9:30 am (half day), location to be announced.